



The Venture of Calling a Pastor

An Open Letter to the Congregation: *God's grace and peace to you as you set out on the adventure of calling a new pastor. Your church leaders are counseled that this is a venture of spiritual discernment rather than a hiring task. You will see the leading of God unfold as the months go by.*

Because ministry is relational, we all will have personal reactions to the announcement of resignation by our pastor or other rostered leader. Sadness, anxiety, and questions about the future arise almost instantly. As bishop, I have made it a top priority to visit the congregational leadership immediately after a resignation; this is a part of my ministry of pastoral care. My presence is intended to provide reassurance, resources, and the support of the mission area. I have urged your Congregation Council to appoint a Transition Team to guide your ministry during this time. And I will locate an interim pastor to provide a ministry of Word and Sacrament during the vacancy. You will be well cared for.

Saying farewell and thanks to your pastor will be a challenging task. You will find that there is a natural desire to hold on to the relationship. Relinquishing something precious is difficult. Farewell words and an appreciation event help. Both you and your pastor are going on to a new chapter in life.

In time, the Council and Transition Team will discern that it is appropriate to initiate a search for a new pastor. The Call Process can be described in three steps: A time of *preparation* begins as the Congregation Council appoints a small, diverse group of able people to be the Call Committee. As the committee and Council first meet to begin the Call Process, Bishop Assistant Jane Mar will visit to offer an Orientation Session; everyone is invited to this presentation. The first tasks of the committee and council will be to complete a congregational self-assessment which is designed to accurately reflect on the congregation's ministry today and on its mission and direction in

the future. You should feel free to talk with committee and council members about your own hopes and dreams for the future. And pray for their work! The committee will also welcome your own recommendations for possible pastoral candidates.

The second step in the process may be called *conversation* for this is a time in which the Call Committee engages candidates in personal interviews to explore the gifts and dreams that both the pastor and the congregation have to offer. During this time of work the committee will meet privately with candidates and represent you as best they can. Confidentiality is important to the process – so is trusting the committee! When the

committee has voted by 2/3 to make a recommendation (and the council has agreed by a 2/3 vote), the candidate will be here to meet the entire congregation and to join you in conversation, worship, and fellowship.

The final step is called *transition*. It is a time in which your pastor-elect will be considering your call, making her or his reply, and beginning the difficult process of saying goodbye there and moving here. You will need to make a place in home and heart for your new pastor! And remember that she/he cannot be the same pastor that your departing pastor had been.

God is here as we begin this Call Process, and we have the certain promise that God will make this journey with us. Lean on God's grace, and Spirit, and goodness!

ALMIGHTY GOD, GIVER OF ALL GOOD GIFTS:
LOOK UPON YOUR CHURCH WITH GRACE AND
GUIDE THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO SHALL
CHOOSE A PASTOR FOR OUR CONGREGATION,
THAT WE MAY RECEIVE A FAITHFUL SERVANT
WHO WILL CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE AND EQUIP
US FOR OUR MINISTRIES; THROUGH JESUS
CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN

- *Bishop Kevin S. Kanouse*

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